* Lesson 1: The Context of Development
* Four parts:
* A.) Biological Context
* B.) Immediate Environment
* C.) Social & Economic Context
* D.) Cultural Context
* A.) Biological Context
* This is the child’s biological makeup, it includes three components:
* 1. the evolutionary heritage shared by all humans
* 2. the child’s individual genetic inheritance
* 3. the results of interaction between genes and the environment
* 1. Human Evolutionary Heritage
* Children do not enter the world as totally blank slates or neutral creatures.
* For example, Infants are born with the ability to suck, seek attachments to caregivers.
* Infants have the tendency to detect and attend to speech sounds this is unique to humans.
* Infants have a precise timetable for many developmental milestones.
* Infants love to examine and manipulate things around them. The satisfaction humans get from discovery has helped humans by encouraging exploration and invention.
* 2. Individual Genetic Characteristics
* Except for identical twins each child has a different individual genetic makeup and thus a somewhat different biological context for development.
* These different genes effect the child’s mental & physical development.
* Individual differences have both a direct and an indirect influences on development. (ex Down syndrome)
* 3. Interaction Between
Genes & the Environment
* Even biological characteristics do not stem solely from genetic inheritance.
* At birth, a child’s biological makeup already includes characteristics produced by the influence of environmental factors.
* Maternal health, nutrition, smoking, drug, or alcohol use during pregnancy can all influence the child’s physical makeup.
* After birth, the child’s biological makeup continues to be influenced by a wide range of environmental factors, for example nutrition, illness, and exposure to lead.
* The child’s developing brain and central nervous system are particularly susceptible to the effects of experience and the environment.
* B. Immediate Environment
* The immediate environment is the people, places, and things with which the child has direct contact.
* The people are most important, both because they interact directly with the child and because they are largely responsible for the child’s physical surroundings.
* Parents for example not only play with their children, but also choose their playthings.
* Availability of objects that are responsive to the child’s actions has been found to be related to the pace of cognitive development.
* Family Context
* The family is a dominant part of a child’s immediate environment. Family members interact directly with the child every day, stimulating language development and other cognitive skills.
* Family members provide children with their first opportunities to form social relationships.
* Family members also provide models for behavior. Much of a child’s understanding of what it is to be male or female, mother or father, husband or wife, comes from the family.
* Finally, the ways in which families are structured and the tasks children are given foster the development of particular characteristics. (nurture)
* The Family System
* At the simplest level, the ides of the system implies that each family member’s behavior depends in part on the behavior of the others. (not only the mother)
* Notice that influences between family members always move in two directions not one, this is called bidirectional effects.
* Family systems are complex, because they are made up of many subsystems. That is the relationships between siblings, between parents and children, between mother and father, and so forth.
* A family system is a open system subject to change, one way of change is by adding or losing a family member. (ex wanting a boy)
* Fathers in the Family System
* Father’s influence can either be direct or indirect. Study of the direct effects of fathers on children’s development has revealed that children are involved with their fathers and emotionally attached to them even in infancy.
* Indirect influences is through the impact he father has on the mother or siblings.
* There is evidence that when a father and mother are together, they tend to show more positive emotions toward their children than either does separately.
* In general a father who maintains a positive, supportive relationship with his wife is indirectly benefitting his children. For example, when the father of an infant provides strong emotional support for the mother her care of their infant is more effective.
* Siblings in the Family System
* Older siblings’ direct effect on younger children includes serving as companions, teachers, and models.
* In one study that compared girls with and without older siblings, those with older brothers were more competitive, while those with older sisters were more feminine.
* Sibling influences are responsible for what are called birth order effects, systemic differences in children’s behavior depending on whether they are first-born, second-born, and so on.
* Sibling influences are not the same across all families, not even in families matched by the age and sex of the children. ( Depends on the family)
* Immediate context outside the family
* The effects of school are powerful on the child, on average a child spends 6 hours a day in school. Characteristics associated with an effective school include strong leadership, teacher participation in decision making, an orderly but not oppressive atmosphere, high expectations, and monitoring of students.
* The peer (friends) groups’ influence on a child increases as the child grows. By adolescence, peers exert a heavy influence on dress, tastes, and activities.
* Every family lives in a particular neighborhood with physical and social characteristics. For example the type and condition of housing, yards, streets, sidewalks, recreational facilities, and businesses in a neighborhood have an impact on children’s activities and development opportunities.
* C.) The Social & Economic Context
* Economic status can affect a child directly if they have poor health care, high crime rates, and general overcrowding.
* Indirect effects are if the parents are stressed by the hardships of poverty or job loss, the quality of their child care may diminish.
* There has been a change of an increase in mothers working outside the home. The studies show there is few differences between a family that the mother works or does not work. It is more related to the family members’ satisfaction with the situation and to the degree of social support available to the mother. (father displeased)
* The effects of a mother’s employment depend on many factors, including the child’s age, how much time the mother spends at work, the quality of substitute care, and the quality of shared time remaining.
* C.) The Social & Economic Context
* Divorce is also a factor that is increasing.
* Research has shown that when a divorce ends parental conflict is generally better for children than a conflict-ridden marriage, but divorce in which the parents’ animosities continue is usually worse for children than a marriage with conflict.
* Ongoing contact with both parents generally reduces the negative consequences of divorce. (no bad mouthing)
* Divorce can also have a negative impact on children if the parent who has custody is under stress, because of a sharp decline in income.
* D.) Cultural Context
* The term culture is used to refer to groups of people who share a common set of values, beliefs, and guidelines for behavior. (ex Chinese)
* Ex Game with Anglo (competitive) & Mexican (work together).
* Children in the nonindustrialized cultures were given tasks important to the well being of their families, such as caring for younger siblings and tending goats while their mothers worked in the fields. These children showed nurturant and responsible behavior.
* In contrast, children in the industrialized cultures were more egotistic and self-centered.